

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6180

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 0365

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB IN

SUBJECT: JUTE WORKERS' STRIKE

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI INFO BOMBAY MADRAS FROM
CALCUTTA JAN 07 REPEATED:

QUOTE

CALCUTTA 0044

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:ELAB, IN

SUBJ:JUTE WORKERS' STRIKE

1. A CONTINUOUS GENERAL STRIKE IS ON FROM 6 JANUARY, INVOLVING
NEARLY 250,000 WORKERS OF 62 JUTE MILLS IN WEST BENGAL.
THE STRIKERS' DEMANDS ARE FAIRLY EXTENSIVE BUT CENTER AROUND
A HIGHER DEARNESS ALLOWANCE AND A 20 PERCENT BONUS PAYMENT.
THE STRIKE CALL HAS BEEN SPONSORED BY INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU.
THESE UNIONS CONTROL ALMOST ALL THE JUTE WORKERS IN WEST BENGAL.

2. A TRIPARTITE MEETING HELD ON 4 JANUARY AT THE OFFICE OF
THE LABOR MINISTER, DR. GOPAL DAS NAG, TO AVERT THE STRIKE,
WAS A FAILURE. THE DEMAND FOR 20 PERCENT BONUS, WHICH WAS
SUBSEQUENTLY SCALED DOWN TO 14 PERCENT, WAS ALSO NOT
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ACCEPTABLE TO THE EMPLOYERS, WHO WERE FIRM NOT TO OFFER

MORE THAN 8.33 PERCENT BONUS. A DEMAND FOR AN AD-HOC PAYMENT OF RS230 TO ALL THE WORKERS WAS ALSO TURNED DOWN BY THE MANAGEMENT.

3. LAST YEAR'S 33-DAY STRIKE, WHICH COMMENCED FROM JANUARY 14, 1974, WAS IN MANY WAYS SIMILAR TO THE PRESENT ONE AND THE WORKERS' DEMANDS WERE ALMOST IDENTICAL. THE STRIKE DECISION LAST YEAR WAS ALSO TAKEN BY THE INTUC, CITU, AITUC, HMS.

4. THE PRODUCTION LOSS ON ACCOUNT OF LAST YEAR'S 33-DAY STRIKE WAS ESTIMATED BY JUTE MILLS ASSOCIATION AUTHORITIES TO BE AROUND 100,000 TONS, VALUED AT ABOUT RS40 CRORES.

5. THE LOSS DUE TO THE PRESENT STRIKE IS ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT RS1 CRORE PER DAY.

6. ACCORDING TO AN INDIAN JUTE MILLS ASSOCIATION SOURCE, 6 MILLS WERE REPORTED TO BE WORKING 6 JANUARY, 16 MILLS CLOSED DUE TO WEEKLY HOLIDAY AND THE REST STRIKE-BOUND. THE SOURCE WAS UNABLE TO CONFIRM AS TO HOW LONG THE STRIKE WILL BE ON AS THE ISSUE DEPENDS ON THE TRADE UNIONS, WHO WERE PRONE TO MAKE THE ISSUE A POLITICAL ONE, SIMILAR TO LAST YEAR'S JUTE STRIKE. ANOTHER INFORMAL FEELER WHICH WE PUT OUT INDICATED THAT MANAGEMENT IS PREPARED FOR A FAIRLY LONG STRIKE. SIGNED ROSSELOT
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